

A Reply to Dinsmoor¹

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The points made by Dinsmoor in "A Note on the Historical Record: MPA and MABA" are an important contribution to our understanding of the critical events leading to the formation of MABA. Such an analysis was long overdue. Yet, I am still not totally convinced by his analysis of the factors leading to the separation of MPA and MABA.

My description (Peterson, 1978) of the events leading to MABA's independence emphasized dissatisfaction with MPA and suggested that this was a relatively important variable. The data clearly show that the MPA program did not involve much operant or behavior modification research and the reason most commonly mentioned was unwillingness of the MPA Program Committee to accept such papers. This point was often made, seldom argued, and never publicly contested until now.

The unwillingness to accept the type of research generally published in *JEAB* or *JABA* was presumed to be simply a manifestation of a generally negative attitude toward this type of work. Now, from reading Dinsmoor's account, it would appear that the negativity in MPA was considerably overestimated. He suggests, in fact, that things weren't so bad to start with and were steadily improving. How can we then, account for the apparent discrepancy between the verbal behavior of the individuals responsible for the founding of MABA and the facts which should have controlled this verbal behavior? There would seem to be at least three possible explanations.

It may have been simply a case of faulty communication. Possibly a few MPA officials and members were quite negative and quite outspoken, but also quite unrepresentative of the organization. Furthermore, a few examples of recalcitrance on the part of MPA may have given rise to variations of the same events with the appearance of being additional, isolated events. It may have been that a few prominent behavior analysts had papers rejected and this became widely known. Regardless, the point is that the climate of distrust was clearly there.

The origin of this distrust, however, is not so clear. The formation of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* has been widely attributed, at least in part, to the unwillingness of editors of other experimental journals to accept papers reporting operant research, presumably

because of the particular within-subject methodology used. It is now interesting to speculate just how many papers *were* actually rejected, and for what reasons. (One of the editors of the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* asserted that operant papers had *not* been rejected on methodological grounds by *J.E.P.* editors.)

A second possibility for the discrepancy may involve the subgroup's responding to the immediate rather than the long term consequences of the behavior of some MPA officials. It may have been that immediate "rejections" by MPA (e.g., "The Guidelines for Organizations Wanting to Meet Jointly with Midwestern Psychological Association") were more salient than the later "acceptances."

One final explanation may be that many of the "founders" of MABA considered separateness a highly desirable goal for a variety of reasons and would have voted for it under any conditions.

What all of this suggests is that the establishment of an independent organization devoted to the orientation known as the analysis of behavior could have come about irrespective of the actions on the part of the MPA officials. In all probability, the behavior of individuals on MPA's governing body, regardless of the variables of which their behavior was a function, strengthened an already existing mood of separation.

I would like to close by agreeing with Dinsmoor in that "... MPA may again become an economical meeting for those of us living in the Midwest to attend." now that MABA has become ABA International. If this occurs, we can thank Dinsmoor, Mertens, Azrin and others who have worked toward this goal.

REFERENCES

- Dinsmoor, J. A., A Note on the Historical Record: MPA and MABA. *The Behavior Analyst*, 1978, 2.
Peterson, M. E., The Midwestern Association of Behavior Analysis: Past, present, future. *The Behavior Analyst*, 1978, 1, 3-15.

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